" Mirwais owed much to his mother, Nazo Tokhay, who wrote a divan or collection of poems of 1000 lines in Pashto. Referring to the sad plight of her people under an oppressive Safavid governor, she wrote:

"It was dawn and the cheeks of the narcissus were wet.
Drops fell from her eyes.
I asked her: what is the matter?
Why do you cry ?
She replied : Because I have had my life's laugher".

Zainab Hotaki, daughter of Mirwais, followed in the footsteps of her grand mother. She studied hard under her tutors and wrote extensively in Pashto and Dari and even became a teacher herself in her father's harem. Because of her erudition she was frequently consulted on affairs of state. When the bright days of independence initiated by Mirwais were darkened and a new conqueror from Persia, Nadir Shah Afshar, appeared before Kandahar in 1738, therefore Zainab stood with her brothers during their stubborn defense and accompanied them to discuss the term of surrender. Later she wrote:

"The bright world looks dark to me.
My heart has been cut to piece by a sword.
The whole Hotak tribe is grief striken
for
their crown has been snatched from them."

Zarghona Ana, mother of Ahmed Shah Baba (1747-73) entitled Ana (grandmother, respected lady) was a great and prudent woman who not only fostered her son in valor, justice and fairness but advised him on the throne of his sultanate as well. She gave him the courage and spirit in order to enable Ahmad Shah to establish such a vast kingdom. It is said that a group of women came to Zarghona Ana to congratulate her upon her son's election as a king by Loya Jirga or national council. She thanked these women for their optimism but added," I will be proud only when my son devouts for country and people's exaltation, leads the scattered tribes to a real unity with knowledge and wisdom, and attains eternal honor for our nation and country. She also put down many rumors against Ahmad Shah as he often been out of Kandahar for military expeditions.

She died when Ahmad Shah was alive and was buried in Kohak village north of Kandahar city.

After Zarghona Ana, the woman who promptly grasped the reins of state and monarchy, and ruled in Herat in the absence of Ahmad shah Baba, was Ahmad Sha's first wife and mother of Temor Shah (1773-93). She played an important role as the head of all the government advisors, secretaries, as well as head of the militants of the Sadozai dynasty. Temor Sha's mother was said to have been inspecting the whole military and administrational affairs.

It is worth mentioning that during this era lived a woman of high character who set an example in Afghan history. This was Mimon Aino. She was an illiterate and ordinary woman, and she refused to welcome her husband one night earlier than other army soldiers who were approaching the Kandahar area after a victorious expeditions into India led by Ahamd Shah. Her husband must have been tired and anxious to see wife and children. But inspite of men's dictatorship in the family and society, she dared to take her husband to Ahmad Shah and tell him to her husband had escaped from the army instead of waiting and entering Kandahar city with his fellow soldiers and the king to be welcomed in national ceremony all together. Ahmad Shah was astonished and liked her courage. Hence he rewarded Aino with land and a Kariz (underground water source) which is still called Aino Kariz, located to the east of Kandahar city.

Fatima Begum was the mother of Zaman Shah. It is said that she was a respected woman, not only because she was a queen, but for the efficiency and talent she possessed. If a high ranking man made a mistake and going to be punished by the king, he immediately appealed to Fatima for forgiveness. Fatima, as a queen, also investigated the position of women and tried to solve their problems.

Timor Shah is said to have 13 daughters which were respected and considered equal to his sons or princes. The famous of them were: Mahro Mah, Geety Feroz, Gohar Taj and others.

"Among the talented there were those on whom restrictions and subordination hung heavily. Ayesha Afghan's dewan is a superb record of the chaotic events following the death of Ahmad Shah, during the reign of

his son Timor Shah. She began writing at the age of 20 and her dewan was published much later, in 1889, in the reign or Amir Abdul Rahman. As the years passed, however, particularly after the death of her 25 year old son, Faiz Taleb, her works reflect deep depression.

This is also the case in the works of Mahboob who was born in Herat. She began life brilliantly under the tutelage of her scholarly brother, but her life was blighted by an unhappy arranged marriage.

"Oh friends, this love - sick one is nearly dying.
Whose to tell that merciless one about her condition ?
Neither luck nor my beloved help me.
How difficult it is to, lead such a life.
You, oh, enticed, remember the enticed.
Free the enslaved.
You wronged me much, now learn to be good.
Sooth my wounds, don't irritate the sore spots.
When you pass by Mahboob's place, if you like,
It would not hurt you to put a heart back into her chest".

Masooma Esmati ( in her book, The Position and Role of Afghan Women in Afghan Society, 1987, Kabul, a recent well known figure among Afghan women writers), chronologically relates famous ladies of the late 18th to the late 19th century of which some of them are condensed as under.

Mughlani Begum has to be remembered for she was appointed as a governor of Lahore because of her qualifications and talent. As her husband, Mir Mueen-ul-Mulk was killed in 1753 and their son Mir Momen was just a child, Ahmad Shah therefore ordered Mughlani Begum, mother of Mir Momen, to rule Lahore as an authorized governor until their son came to maturity. She was granted a piece of land for her husband's services.

Zainab has to be mentioned for her natural talent. She was an illiterate poetess who impressed Zaman Shah and was awarded with highly valuable gems from his special treasury.

Ruqia Begum wife of Shah Shuja (Afgan King, 1804 - 9) also

called Wafa Begum (woman of loyalty) was admired for her virtuous nature. Another marriage took place with the daughter of Amir-e- Bokhara as he wanted to assure Shah Shuja that he would no longer revolt against him.

It is interesting to find out that when Shah Shuja was perceived to be in the hand of British invaders in Afghanistan (1840), he refused to migrate to India and contact the resistance leaders. In order to be trusted by these leaders that he take the side of resistance against the invasion, Shah Shuja gave away his daughters in marriage to the resistance or national leaders to ensure kinship with them. Thus they gave a girl to be married to Shah Shuja. Hence the resistance leaders joined this ousted king in the aftermath of such relationship. The union was only possible after women sacrificed their lives.

During the reign of Amir Dost Mohd Khan and the invasion of British troops into Afghanistan, women set examples such that were rarely found among men. They actively and directly participated in the struggle to achieve liberty and prove their anti colonial spirit.

Of these great women, Loya Ady ( mother of Wazir Fateh Khan) has to be remembered with pride as she was not only remarkable for her services in Sadozai period, but also for her talent and for being a wise advisor to her husband in the Mohammed Zai government. As she was of Barakzai tribe a fort is called after her at Nawa-e-Barakzai in Helmand.

Amir Dost Mohammed Khan's sister (or Madad Khan's mother whose name is not mentioned in the reference) whose name is recorded with pride in Anglo-Afghan war. She lost her husband in youth. According to Mohan Lal in the above mentioned book by Masooma Ismati, when Amir Dost Mohammed Khan was defeated in Kabul and withdrew towards Bamyan and his family was sent as prisoners to India. This highly spirited brave and freedom-loving woman secretly set out to Kohistan (north of Kabul). There she travelled day and night by foot from one village to another in order to invite the elders and people of influences to resist against the British invaders and join Amir Dost Mohd Khan. Mir Darwish and Malik Saifuddin, the most influential in northern Kabul were persuaded by this ambitious mother. These people of influence became the enemies and great obstacles against the British army. She had the Koran in her hands

and in accordance with tradition, she raised her shawl to plead for the support of the communities and she spoke persuasively. Madad Khan's mother would not leave the village until the local people had promised a Jihad (holy war) and participation in national defence. Had a village been not helpful, she would not drink or eat there.

This skilled eloquent Afghan woman spoke in such an exciting way that she persuaded many volunteers to participated in the Jihad.

Khadija or Mirmon Khajo, mother of Wazir Akbar Khan was the most powerful and beautiful queen who was assigned to be head of Amir Mohammed Khan's Harem Sara. She had access to business as well. In politics she exploited her influence over Amir. It is said that once her husband, Amir Dost Mohd Khan was punishing his sons (Afzal Khan and Akbar Khan) for drinking wine. Khadija was surprised by Amir's act as Amir himself drank excessively. The queen objected and towards Amir saying "This is not just. No son can inherit a father's domain unless he inherits his father's character, and not be an example of his father. Therefore if your sons do not inherit drankness form you, they will be deprived of your obligation and the people would not hold them in esteem." Amir was deeply impressed by this speech from his favorite and beautiful wife, and he promised instantly not to drink anymore. (Masoma Ismati. p.60)

In spite of all those male dominated environment and strict measures against women, such instances are found which man-made history can not ignore.

Bibi Karami Kashmiri has to be mentioned for she set an example in her love and loyalty to her husband, Rahim Khan Aminul Mulk. He was said to be captured by Kamran in Kandahar. Jahangir, Kamran Cousin knew about Rahim Khan wife's beauty and tried to possess her. Bibi Karami was reported for his intention. She surprisingly dived into a well which fortunately was dry. Jahangir searched for her, but was not successful. Her neighbor saw her when she fell into the well and later she fed Karami secretly bringing her food and water. Finally her husband released and joined Karimi.

Another interesting story narrated in the book by Masooma Ismati

is about the wife of Yazdan Khan who was the most powerful land lord of the Hazara minority in central Afghanistan. Amir Dost Mohammed Khan is said to have had no trust in him. So he wanted to form a plot against him and he invited Yazdan Khan to come to the court of Kabul in order to take him as a captive. The wife of Yazdan Khan refused the invitation and prevented her husband from going as she did not trust Amir's oath. But Yazdan seemed to have accepted it. After a heated debate, presumably the powerful couple agreed to go together. The wife wearing men's clothes, they rode towards Kabul.

They reached the court. As it was planned, they were put into prison. Yazdan asked to be released so as to collect taxes for Amir and leave his colleagues as hostages. Amir accepted Yazdan Khan's proposal. He left for Hazara Jat and his companions were in jail where his wife, was as well.

Few days later a number of Hazara people entered the court in an uproar and said: " It is strange that Amir does not even desist from the imprisonment of ladies. " The guards were amazed, looked into prison and realized that Yazdan's wife was there; so Amir had to release her immediately with her companies as it was a matter of shame in Afghan culture. She soon fled Kabul and joined her husband who remained an opponent of Amir.

Nawaba, the daughter of Amir Kabir, is said to have died of the agony of civil riots in the country. She tried to prevent her son from a fratricidal battle in Herat. Nawaba called upon the local people of influence and made such an impressive speech that according to Masooma Ismati, the participants cried as she described the consequent of such battles. She insisted on unity and brotherhood. But regretfully no one agreed to her proposal. As the fighting did not stop, she fell ill. After three days agony and pain, she died. Sultan Ahmad Nawaba's husband, who could not endure the torment of separation, died soon after his wife.

Mirmon Ayesha was one of the most influential and active queens who had an effective role in the history of Afghanistan during the 19th century from 1863 to 1878 which is the reign of Amir Shir Ali Khan. This Amir is said to have loved Ayesha beyond the love of matrimony. She was directly involved in politics and affairs of the court. Masooma Ismati later

narrates that it is said that after the selection or nomination of a successor, Afghanistan's first cabinet was formed in her presence inside the harem.

Women not only proved to be fully effective in royal spheres, but in the lower stratum of society as well. Evidence for this statement can be found in a famous scene of 1880 whose heroine was Malalai, 17. Holding up the flag from a deceased soldier in the fierce battle against the British invasion at Maiwand she shouted like an angel that:

"I shall make a beauty spot out of my beloved's blood.
Which will put to shame the roses in my garden.
Young love, if you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand,
By God, someone is saving you far a token of shame."

Gulnara Ana who was born in to an illiterate, nomadic but strongly patriotic family. She did not benefit from attending school however, but learned form local literate culture in non- literacy. She is said to have been tall, robust and vigorous woman being modest, she wore simple clothes, fastening a kerchief around the waist. Gulnara encouraged the young to be united and to destroy a bastion of British troops to the south of Kabul. She finally succeeded in her plan but at the cost of her life. She become a martyr.

Mirmon Akram was a brave and loyal woman of her time who achieved fame in the war of liberation - symbolic in patriotism. Her husband was captured by the British and shelled to death with a canon. She did not lose her courage. Instead she gathered men and women persuading them to fight for freedom. It was her morale that defeated the invaders at Arghandab. She was martyred for her love and devotion in this battle.

Another heroine of the Afghan history in the late 19th century narrated by Masooma Ismati, is Ghazi Aday. Being an energetic and wise woman, she actively participated in the battle. Gun and flag were always with her. She saw her husband dying of a wound but said, "Congratulate me, oh people !!" (i.e she was proud to see him being martyred). It is said that she lost her son as well.

Bibi Sahiba, Bakhtnama, who killed a Sikh and an English soldier. Masooma, Mastora, Zohra-e-Kabuli, Tor Pekee from Boldak have to be mentioned and recorded for their struggle and sacrifice in the cause of freedom and prosperity of their nation. In history, they will never be forgotten and what must be said here is "may their soul rest in peace."

The advantage that the women of higher class had, was at least their talents were encouraged a little. What they produced, especially in the field of art, was psychologically acknowledged by their surrounding, since they originated from the top layer of society. At the end of the 19th century, Afghanistan witnessed a delicate and feeble upward move, (in the sense of liberalization) limited to the high - ranking personnel.

Amena Fedawi descending from Amir Dost Mohammad Khan, was a talented poetess and a scholarly woman living during the reign of Amir Abdul Rahman Khan. She, according to Ms Fahima Rahimi, was famous for her erudite interpretation of the Koran and Hadith (Islamic tradition ) and so respected by the Amir Abdul Rahman Khan that he granted her, a woman and an annual allowance of 400 Kabuli rupees. She married twice, had two children by each husband, but none was destined to live long. So Amena turned almost exclusively to religion for strength and went on the Haj to Mecca on two occasions before dying in 1886, aged 28."

Mirmon Halima has to be proudly recorded for she was a wise and very patriotic queen in the country's history by the late 19th century. She was known by the nickname of Babo Jan. Being a talented and a woman of virtuous character, she wrote poems as well. A queen of prudence, Abdul Rahman respected her and she used her influence over Amir in very difficult times. Her feeling as an ardent patriot is evident in her poems below

Raise for the sake of God,
The flag of the independence,
Over your shoulders.
May the mouth of our nation,
Be sweeten with the fruits of independence.
From now on,
I will draw coilyrium on my eyes.

With the foot soil of the independence.

Amir Abdul Rahman Khan was an indomitable ruler but there was a popular saying at the time, that though all the world feared Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, he feared Babo Jan, his engaging, intelligent wife. She was keenly interested in politics, a talent she inherited from her mother Bibi Shams-e-Jahan, a daughter of Amir Dost Mohammed Khan, who was Amir Abdul Rahman's most trusted friend and advisor, a great tribute from one whose suspicion of all around him was almost paranoic. She once travelled to Mazar-e-Sharif at the request of the Amir to attempt to reconciliation with a rebellious cousin. Throughout the troubled 18th and 19th centuries, outstanding women were frequently sent on such delicate missions between contending parties.

Ulya Janab was another royal lady active on the literacy scene during the succeeding reign of Amir Habibullah, son of Amir Abdul Rahman. One of Amir Habibullah's queens, she grew up in British India where her father had been exiled. She dressed in the latest European fashion and was fluent in Urdu, one of the principal languages spoken in northern India. In Kabul, the queen became the first woman to attempt a major translation from Urdu to Dari. Her work on Al-Farooq, a life of the Caliph Omar, companion of the Prophet Mohammed, was tragically interrupted by her untimely death. This valuable contribution was later completed by Najaf Ali Khan and published in 1932 during the reign of King Nadir Shah, brother of Ulya Janab.

It was 1905 when the founder of the first modern and liberal government in Afghanistan, Mohmood Tarzai, arrived at Kabul. He was deeply impressed by waves of changes that had hit modern Turkey. Being inspired by difficulties of living in exile and the backwardness of his country. Mohmood Tarzai did his best to accomplish his dreams for making progress in Afghanistan. Reforms were introduced through his son-in-law's government, i.e. during the reign of Amir Amanuallah Khan (1919 - 1929). More than any other layer of the Afghan society, women benefitted from those reforms, especially the right of getting education for girls and the option to work in the government's structure.

Thus the out come of this era was that a considerable number of

female figures appeared in public activities and proved their efficiency for the development in the life of their nation. The names of some of those ladies leading the country at that time, are; Asma Rasmya, born in Damascus in 1877 and wife of Mohmood Tarzai was the first principal of girl's school and first editor of a women's paper in Afghanistan; Queen Soraya, daughter of Asma Resmya, who took a very active role for the well-being of women; Saraj-ul-Banat King Amnullah's sister, an active figure in the government and director for Masturat (Covered ones i.e females) Hospital in Kabul; Bilquis and Ruh Afza, Rasmya's nieces director and vice-director of Girl's school donated by Babo Jan at the royal palace; Kobra director of Women's Protective Association; Ms. Khadija who taught for a while at Masturat. And there are several others to mention.

However serious mistakes were committed during the reign of Amir Amanullah, especially in introducing reforms which resulted in the failure of his government, this short era was still fruitful in sowing the seeds of change in the conscious of Afghan people.

This however, is an important lesson for us to be used for introducing social reforms in the future. It becomes more important when after more than a decade of introducing and enhancing wrong and unrealistically designed policies from both powerful sides of the civil war, both of their ideals damaged women's real recognition. Their already vulnerable socio-cultural status again fall down to threats of tradition.

Kubra Mazhari Maloro, an Afghan Pashto writer and a journalist has elaborately collected the works of a number of women writers and poetesses in her book titled "Pashtoon Women Writers and Poetesses, Kabul, 1366 or 1988." The writer found this valuable piece of work performed by women that is a sufficient ground of prove of the talent and artistic nature they possess.

Here some of these poetesses are summarily and chronologically gathered so as to relate what they had in mind.

Rabia Kharote born around 1862 in Katawaz south of Kabul, who as usually expected, failed in her love with a nomadic youth.
Burning with this obsession which opposed the customs which depressed her love, Rabia's poems represent her desires inflamed in her heart as found in

## Women in Afghanistan History:

Although it seems difficult to sketch a past for women in a country where every privileges were portioned between the sexes, the history of the area is fully documented and designed by men. It is useful to find out and select incidents which happened in the course of time which historians have recorded. Those records can play important role in the understanding of the situation that caused the decline of civilizations which were not against female.

If we compare the past with the present we see that women today are more socially backward than they were in the past, and yet that era is much condemned. Being in touch with the past however, offers us a complete picture of the position of women. It defects how century by century men have devised the customs and have intentionally enhanced their own position in all the cultural institutions and in the economy which again had been in the hands of the men.

The customary behavior of the populace regarding women has never been in one form or the other. Contrary to popular believes, despite all that often rough outlook of the area men, it should be also noticed that men for the sake of the comfort and prosperity of their female counterparts, throughout the Afghan history , encountered hardships, proved to be honest in their love promises, faced deaths, tried to be loyal husbands, brothers and fathers. They welcomed women at battles field for which they strongly felt proud of.

Still a woman is convicted to be a second and inferior sex. But a man with all the dominant spirit have never been free of the influence of his surrounding women. The most despotic rulers had proportionally been influenced by an unknown, ever veiled harem woman. One of the complication of the Afghan culture is that in many incidents of the daily social or political life, women have often more than half of the roles but frank acknowledgment from the male side has usually been ignored. Man is consciously confessor and feels the existence and power of women beside him. This has been the sacrifice of Afghan women that they observed men enjoying the outcome of what they achieved in their lives and were made to be convinced.

one of her piece as under:

"Oh camel, camel of Daman.
Why do I flock you as you go lonely.
Fanciful is the bell beneath your harness.
My love where do you escape from me.
Oh tent, black tent.
You move your curtain in the breeze of noon.
There, you are surrounded by camels with saddle- cloth.
Preferable you are as you can look at my lover.
Oh love, my love, get heated.
What fervor you can see in my face.
Burned my skirt, lost honor.
So cried I that my eyes became swollen.
Oh wind, the wind of Khorasan,
My sweetheart, breeze till Daman.
Take the fragrance of my hair.
From me,
With the sign to my beloved.

Bala Nashta is famous in the field of poetry and literature who was born in northern Helmand and was active until about 1922. It seems she has been leading a depressed life, as is obvious in her poem below.

"Oh beautiful patridge wondering through mountains,
You fly on your own desire over meadows.
Take me up too into your claws.
So to see the peaks of mounts."

Spina another poetess had expressed her feeling and excitement as:

"The swords of Pashtoons have always been glittering.
Blinded the eyes of enemies from the lightening.
They were man, Pashtoon warriors.
Staunch in courage were these zealots.
As they took the swords out of the scabbards."

Zebo a skilled and artistic poetess of the beginning of 14th solar

century, she elaborately arranged her poems (1922) which is a mirror of the agony of separation:

"Flows blood of my heart every moment.
My clothes thoroughly became blood stained.
Wounded by the arrow of separation, I would not be cured.
Tired became my eyes in awaiting my beloved.
Why the preachers advise me all the time ?
I swear by God that I will not withdraw,
From the love of my friend."

Several other talented women, skilled in art and have been living at this time in Afghanistan. To name them, are; Mirmon Sahib Ajeza, Shamo Jan, Qudree, Piaree, Aftab Pari, Wabjan, Bajori,Mirmon Rahila, Saeeda Qanata Begum, Saeeda Hamida and others.

Education for women was encouraged in and out of Afghanistan which were mainly concentrated at the city centers. After 1959 the hidden talents of women appeared in public and were exploited in the development projects in both official and private sectors.

As a result, the female figures appeared and proved their efficiency for the second time in the modern history of the country.

Ms Fahima Rahimi relates some other remarkable women in her book, especially those who were let to be appeared publicly without prior official announcement during the celebration of the day of Independence on the 24th of August 1959. Daud Khan was prime minister at that time who committed himself to make an improvement on the plight of women. Here I have attempted to summarize her brief survey of those famous ladies in the following text:

Shafiqa Ziaie is an example among these pioneers, born in Kabul in 1928, she completed her studies up to the 8th grade when she was orphaned. Unable to attend the school as she was taking care of her two brothers and a sister, she surprisingly,took annual exams with no fail and graduated from Malalay High School.

After attending Women's College and working as an inspector of girls' schools, she studied French and Administration in 1960 in Switzerland for a year. Then she became a minister without portfolio in Kabul. She retired in 1973.

Alia Hafeez, born in Kabul in 1929 was graduated from Malalay (1948) and from Women's College and later studied in the United States where she received Master Degree in education. While Alia Hafeez was a teacher at Malalay, she had been an inspector for Primary Schools in Kabul and President for the Institute of Education from 1969 to 1970. Later she taught psychology at the collage of Letters and Humanities within the Kabul University where she was the director of the Girls' Dormitory. She had also attended international meetings such as the 1964 UNESCO at Tehran, meetings in the philippines (1965). in London in 1973 and the International women's congress In east Berlin in 1975. alia could speak in Dari, Pashto, French, and English.

Masooma Ismati, born in Kabul in 1930, was graduated from Malalay High School. She was reported to be interpreter for French medical staff while she was a student of 11th grade. As she had been teaching at Malalay, she also enthusiastically followed Women's College. After graduation and working as a supervisor for girls' schools in 1956, she attended and succeeded in her studies in education administration in the United States in 1958 after which she became the Principal of Zarghona High School.

Masooma Ismati was later (1959) appointed Director General of Secondary Education and Women's Education while at the same time she edited the magazine called "Women's Education" to enlighten women on social affairs, economic and politics. She also lectured geography at the University of Kabul. Being active politician of her time, she became a member of the Loya Jirga or Great National assembly and avidly defended the rights of women at lower house for which she was elected from Kandahar.

Masooma was a well-known figure in the press on editorials concerning the women's movement in Afghanistan in its different aspects. She actively participated in international conferences such as UNESCO (1959), India (1961), Tehran and England in 1963. Also at a seminar on

Family Planning in the Philippines in 1975, attending the International Women's conference in Bulgaria in 1975.

As a matter of pride, Ismati won an award from the Women's Coordination Committee in India. She was one of 43 women from all over the world who contributed to the progress and welfare of women. Beside, Pashto and Dari, Ms Masooma speaks French and English. She also won the "Ariana" Prize for her work on Khoshal Khan Khatak which was awarded to the highest literary work of the year. Ismati is an author of several books as well.

Ms Sayed Bibi Naqi, has been one of the most energetic women who served her country for more than 3 decades. She led a difficult life as her father died during her childhood. She attended Midwifery School and later Malalay High School where female students had to be covered all over the body.

Of the two members of the Constitutional Advisory Committee (in which one was Alia Hafeez) Fatima Kaify, obtained a B.A. Degree in Social Studies from the Faculty of Literature in the University of Kabul.

Fatima also took an M.A. in Home Economic Education in the US. She became the head of the Department of Home Economics at the Kabul University. The four elected members of the Loya Jirga were; Kobra Norzai, Aziza Amani, Naiba from Khulm and Najiba from Herat.

Here are a number of women who dared to start work or occupy governmental positions for the second time of official unveiling and appeared publicly despite ground pressure after President Daud Khan announced his reform regarding women.

Ms Maga Rahmani is the first author of a comprehensive book on women in Afghanistan. She also wrote the book "Literary Figures Behind Veils " published in Dari in 1952. She could speak Russian German and Pashto.

Ms Ayesha Maqsudi and Halima Rafat were the first two nurses in Afghanistan.

Ms Sabira Nasir, Lecturer at the faculty of Medicine in Kabul and Jalalabad.

Ms Nazifa Ghazi Nawaz, secretary General of the Family Guidance Association, the first graduates from Mid Wifery at the Maternity Hospital in 1956.

Mahbooba Rafiq, the first and modern career diplomat for the minister of Foreign Affairs. She contributed much to the plight of Afghan women as well.

The first batch of "Ariana Air Line" receptionists and hostesses were; Najeya Wali, Zayeda Ata and Fazela Ataee. They fought prejudices and other customary problems women were faced with in such a work place.

Kobra, director of the Institute and long time leader in the women's movement. She was reported to be one of the first women who responded positively to the unveiling of women announced by the government in Afghanistan. Ms Kobra Noorzai became minister for health who was the first woman to hold the Cabinet Minister's post in Afghanistan.

Nafeesa Shayeq was the first editor of Mirmon (i.e. woman) magazine who was also the Director General of Publicity and Promotion for the Institute from 1976 to 1978. She also served as Director of Women's Welfare at the Rural Development Center.

Ms Aziza has to be named for her valuable contribution towards women. She was a chairperson of Women's Coordinating Committee of Afghanistan. Aziza had also been heading the Cultural Prizes Department at the Ministry of Information & Culture. She was reported to be one of the first two women senators appointed in 1965 along with Humaira Saljuki. Aziza had been one of the most active ladies in various fields and her services can not be missed out of the modern Afghan history.

Halima Refat was also one of the first nurses in Afghanistan. She started her work in 1932 in Kabul that was a very difficult time for women to work. Developed her career, she was said to had been one of the erector in establishment of the first women social organization in Afghanistan

(1947). Halima was a staunch supporter of women's movement in the country. She was reported to be the first woman deliver a speech in Pashto on the day of Pashtonistan at Women's General Park in Kabul. She participated in various official conferences in which she defended the right of women. After 45 years of service mostly engaged in administration, she was retired in 1977 leaving behind four children nurtured and trained for the progress of the country.

Kamela Wayezi was the first girl guide to begin a career as a guide leader in 1960. For sometime she represented Afghanistan in the United States, Germany , Pakistan, India and Iran as a girl guide.

Around the same time, in the field of journalism, Maria graduated from the Department of Journalism in the faculty of Letters and Humanities, edited the weekly women's page in the Pashto Daily Hewad (Homeland).

Fahima Ayubi had been a reporter and a feature writer for the English medium daily paper "The Kabul Times" which had a weekly page for women.

Anis ( Companion ) a daily paper for which the women's page had been edited by Ms Fariha. And Kamkyano Anis (Children's Companion) a magazine for which Nadia had been an assistant editor.

Rahela Rasekh an assistant editor for Zhwandoon (Life) a magazine published weekly.

Norhan and Liela wrote articles about women at Jamhuriat (The Republic).

Nafeesa Abasi who supervised the Women's Institute which published a major magazine for women was Mermon (woman).

"Afghanistan" edited by Maliha Zafar who also served as the director of the Foreign and Publication Department in 1967.

Asefa Etemadi had been editing "Kahol" (family) a monthly magazine which contributed much to the enlightenment of women to secure social justice and realize their rights as had been guaranteed in the

constitution. Asefa as a young journalist had actively worked and was a well known figure in the government press and edited other magazines as well.

In the field of communication, Latifa Kabir Saraj was the first news announcer at Radio Kabul, later called Radio Afghanistan. Latifa had been versatile as she taught at Malalay and Adult Literacy Programme at the Women's Institute. She acted once at the stage os Zainab Nandary, "Women's Cinema".

Parween was the first woman singer from a higher family in Badakhshan. She sang for the first time in 1951 at Radio Kabul.In entertainment, Parween played an active role and travelled to many countries.

Habiba Asker has to be recorded as one of the first female actresses who began acting from the age of 12. In 1963 she was proclaimed "Actress of the year".

In the field of justice and law the first graduates were Hakima Mustamandi who finished her studies in 1963 and later studied in Paris and then actively occupied many posts. The other members of the first group of judges were Ms Rahela and Soraya Parwez.

Ms Shayesta Nawabi was one of the first judges to be appointed. She was born in Kabul (1948) and graduated from the Law College in 1968. She worked as secretary for the legal Sub Committee of the Women's Coordination Committee for Afghanistan.

Alya Abed was a 1968 graduates of the Law College in Kabul. She was appointed to the Children's Court where she served for two times.

During the years of 1970 to 1979 a considerable number of Afghan women were officially encouraged to take an active role in country's administrational and managerial posts. In fact government's internal structure was run by energetic active women. Education was particularly dominated by educated women of which some of them were introduced above. Kabul and other cities development could be attributed to women's socio-cultural endeavors. Urban families especially in Kabul gained a higher socio-economic status. The Afghan nation as a whole

eventually realized the potential capability that women possess. As the process of social development was evolutionary in nature, the traditional reactions from the rural spheres towards them systematically reduced. Yet, if reaction was felt, it never sound interesting to the public anymore. The educated women had a tremendous impact on house-wives and other middle class families in general.

Radio, magazines, newspapers, seminars, conferences and other media propaganda elevated public awareness particularly women exploited that social upheaval. The middle class was properly ready to digest change towards progress. Traditional minor biases were forgotten within society resulting in people's orientation to a general improvement.

Compilation of the data about this era's prominent figures required a proper survey which I could not conduct on the basis of two major factors. First is that the publications of the mentioned period were displaced from Kabul in the recent unprecedented chaos. Second, their biographies needed a proper group work or other's indirect cooperation so as to be included here. As the seventies or early eighties, is quite recent in time, female could thus not be recorded under historical figures as many of them are expected to play their active role in the process of country's future rehabilitation.

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The customary approved relation between men and women which is man made phenomenon, has been seen as rightful. It was justified, in the very early stages of the civilization of the area and declined later especially during medieval times. For us to be convinced that the present ideas of the dominant males today have not been eternal, let us review the history of the our early predecessors.

The making of a statue is undoubtedly a reflection of a commemoration and tribute paid to a personality who introduced civilized life and prosperity to a community or a nation as a whole. However, statues or figurines are sometimes found with little historical knowledge of its living personality. But it is strongly believed that the living being that the statue represent was of great importance to that people in his/her time. These statues were practical, social identities which later in the passing of time turned into figures of superstition.

Ms Fahima Rahimi in her book ( women in Afghanistan /Frauen in Afghanistan, 1977 , with a 1985 update by Nancy Hatch Dupree) found that:

"Pottery figurines of the mother goddess, being at he same time voluptuous, to symbolize power over life and fertility, and terrifyingly ugly, to symbolize equal power over death and the unknown were used as part of religious ritual in the Afghan area as early as the 3rd millennium B.C.".

Some historians believe that these figurines relate to the matriarchal periods, and deduce that the Panjwai area of the Afghanistan was under matriarchal rule during third millennium B.C. The discovery of bronze affected not only men but deeply women too. Form the bronze, besides arms, women made ornaments for themselves.The artisans created different kinds of mirrors which were made from clear and polished sheets, in which they could look at their faces. And this is what which depicts as advanced culture for the time.

Before the Aryans massive migration or dispersion of the Indo-European tribes,they were fortunately able to compose two important religious books, the Rigveda and Avesta. These books throw light on the manners, customs and religious beliefs of that time. Apparently the Rigveda was composed between 2500 to 1500 B.C. by the Aryans which was

completed later by the Brahmans in India.

Looking in the mirror of Afghans' glorious past, we find notable ladies who were either Aryana's rulers, goddesses or prominent figures in literature. Rigvedic sources mention some of well known ladies of that time as under:

Gosha who lived between 2000 to 1000 B.C. in Aryana as a poetess; Yami, a sister of King Yama (who ruled thousands of years before ) was a popular poetess; Apala who lived between 2000 to 1000 B.C. was also a poetess. Sar Prachni was a well known figure of the same time. Sorya a rational thinker and a poetess who according to the book of the Rigveda, once wrote :" Truth and reality is that basis on which the earth stands on." Lady Visvara a figure of literature of the Rigvedic civilization. Zachi Pavlomi a famous figure of the same time in Aryana. Andany who in her poem criticized polygamy common at the time she lived; and Lopamodra whose poems are recorded in the first Rigvedic book.

But the most beautiful creation of Rigvedic hymns according to Mohammed Ali (in his book "Afghanistan" Kabul, 1969, p.53) is Ushas, the charming goddess of the Dawn. She is celebrated to in some twenty hymns. The name meaning the "Shinning one" is cognate to the Latin " Aurora" and the Greek "Eos". When this goddess is addressed, the physical phenomenon of dawn in never absent form the poets mind. She is the most beautiful creature, the charm of which is unsurpassed in the descriptive religious lyrics of any other literature. Ushas is the radiant maiden in the sky, daughter of Dysus. She is the bright sister of dark night, and she shines with the light of her lover, Surya, who follows her patiently.

Professor Dost Mohd Dost a known Afghan researcher recently unveils a heroine (in his book " Afghanistan in Avesta" Kabul 1990) called Zarina about which he says "Of the central and (western) Aryan tribes called Saaks, most of the whom remained in their mother land, and the rest spread across the central Asian boundaries during the first years of 1000 B.C. are said to have created a political union by the end of the seventh and beginning of the sixth centuries B.C.". According to this source, the union was concentrated in a center and was led by a Saaki heroine woman called Zarina. Queen Zarina united Saaks' nomadic tribes including some Yashino people under one flag and for the sake of another queen, Partyana, who left

Median Empire (during Artin's rule, in today's Iran) and joined the Saaks union, for which she was donated cities and lands by Saaks.

Saaki women are very brave and accompany their men side by said to battle. But Queen Zarina was the bravest. She freed her people from the neighbors' domination. Many cities were built and assuaged her nationals ceremonies or formalities.

After Zarina's death, Saaks built a pyramid like temple on her tomb that was about 45 meters long and 15 meters high. On the bottom of Zarina's memorials tomb, the Saaks placed her statue, and bowed down as a sing of respect as was done, for other heroic ancestors.

The above narratives depict women's high position in Saaks society, as witnessed by the place of Princess Zarina.

Spritry, according to Professor Dost is another princess, who is described in Katesi's writings as having organized a large military army composed of women.

Mother's headship relations are tight and indisputable. A deadman's inheritance was owned by his off spring, but received by the children of his sister(s). This custom had been maintained by the Saakis until second and first centuries B.C. On the basis of this custom not only inheritance but the thrown and crown could be received by a sister's son or daughter.

Anahita, the major deity of her time, awarded the title of Goddess of Oxus, who was admired in Avesta, the principle source of the doctrines for Zoroaster, lived and taught around 600 B.C. at Balkh, north of Afghanistan. Avesta extols Anahita as a young graceful, tall, beautiful, liberal lady of good nature with fat arms, fastened golden belt in between, sitting in her carriage, holding the rains of four horsed carriage. The horses are of wind, cloud, rain and hoarfrost. A crown is on her head as if a circle, that fixed a hundred shining gems on it. And from the crown drawn curly ribbons too. She wears a golden necklace, square earrings, golden shoes with golden laces and highest place is her dwelling in the sky.

The Lord instituted Nahid (Venus) in the globe of the sun. At the

behest of the Lord Nahid descends form the summit of the sky, rain, snow and hoarfrost. Because of supplication of abstinent, cleans men's sperm, and women's amuion and eases delivery for women, filter milk, multiply herd and flock and under her auspices, the country throughout, enjoy happiness, blessing and prosperity.

During 6th-4th centuries B.C. after Ánahita's death, her shrine was dedicated to her worship and celebrated afterwards in the province of Balkh.

"Buddhism spread through the area in the early centaurs A.D. to be followed in the areas south of the Hindo Kush by Hinduism.
Recent archeological excavations north of Kabul have retrieved a magnificent marble statue of the Hindo goddess Umaheshvara seated with her husband Shiva, a child clutching the hem of her skirt. In the center of Kabul, a mountainous ridges which divides the city is named for Asmai, another Hindo goddess. In Ghazni. a striking statue of Durga, another manifestation of Shiva consort stood in a chapel directly across form a standing figure of the Buddha. After she was destroyed no other goddesses were fashioned".(Women in Afghanistan by Fahima Rahimi. 1977, Kabul)

"The spring of 327 B.C. saw Alexander hard in combat subduing the remainder of the Sagdian towns. Many guerrillas holed up in the heretofore impregnable Sagdian Rock (Sisimithres) near Derbent ..... but the early morning light revealed Alexander's "air born" troops standing on the sky line above the startled guerrillas, who immediately surrendered.

Among the prisoners was Roxane, (Rokhshana, Afghan pronunciation) the lovely ( according to most accounts and particularly Afghan folklore) daughter of Oxyartes, a leader in Bactriana. Alexander fell in love with her, but refused to force his attention. Oxyartes, impressed by Alexander's courteous behavior (and possibly with an eye on a valuable political alliance), also surrendered.

...... shortly thereafter, Alexander , married Roxane in a partly Persian, partly Macedonian ceremony, Alexander, following Macedonian custom, cut a wheat cake with his sword, and both he and Roxane ate morsels" (Afghanistan, L. Dupree, 1990.p 281 and 282).

Just before advent of Islam, sources name and mention the status

of women of the area of Khurasan, of which the description given by the late Afghan historian, professor Abdul Hai Habibi is notable.

"In the seventh century women of were of special importance in Khurasan society which they lacked in the following eras. By the virtue of the rules of that time, women had the right to govern and occupy a ruling position as well. Of which are the offspring of Khesro - Parviz called Boran Dukht the 39th queen and Aarazmi Dukht the 31st queen of the latest Sasanian Dynasty who were of Zoroaster religion attained queenship about 630 A.D. So, it can be inferred that women in our country's western Zoroastrian society had high status.

Also in northern Khurasan and the city of Bokhara , at the time of the expansion of the Arabs sovereignty, a queen after her husband death, Bedon Bokhar Khadat in lieu of her son, Tughshada (who was just a baby) ruled for 15 years. She compromised with the Arabs and lived around 100th solar calendar. From this example it is evident that in the early days of advent of Islam, women's place was very high and respected enough that it was even suitable for kingship and governing as well."

..... When the Arabs from the west made an assault on this territory, they took women captive as bondwomen. Since these women were of a special culture and tradition and enjoyed humanly virtues and etiquette with good customs, they reached the courts of great Arab caliphs. Many of Abbasid and Amayyad caliphs were born to these Khurasani and non-Arab ladies .........

Of these we can name Marjal, wife of Haroon Rashid and mother of Mamon Rashid, Abbasid caliph. This caliph who was an upholder of science and culture, and many scientific works were translated into Arabic at his endeavor, was nurtured by this Khurasani mother."

The revolution Islam brought about was indeed generally an uprooting phenomenon. Islam denounced and forbade female infanticide; pre Islamic customs were condemned; men and women were considered equal before the law; knowledge became incumbent on every male and female; sanctified marriage; ensured equal rights and economic independence for women; slaves were set free; idolatry vanished and a social order was introduced such that justice, brotherhood, fairness and

honesty were its messages. One of the most outstanding issues the Holy Quran discusses (especially in chapter Al Nissa and Noor, i.e Women and Light ) is the female position in various field of social life.

After a short period of time, during medieval time, Islamic principals, especially concerning women were put on the shelf of oblivion; vanity replaced modesty; prejudice rationality;
superstition knowledge ; and injustice justice relating to either individuals or the whole society and slavery again reared its head.

As customs largely remain part of culture, they do so to the extent that they overshadow real Islamic doctrine. In Afghanistan the first known scholarly woman who tasted such policy and found that it cost her life, was Rabia Balkhi. She was the foremost poetess of her time despite the fact that women were kept in seclusion and jealously guarded, she proved to be a talented and virtuous artist. Her poems are always recalled in peoples mind.

Below is her poem conveying how she fell in love with Baktash who is said to be a slave of her brother. After her love was revealed, the royal barber was ordered to open her veins in a hot bath. As Ms Rahimi states: "Bursting into the bath, he found Rabia dying having written her last poem on the wall with her own blood:

I am caught in love's web so deceitful.
None of my endeavors turned fruitful.
I knew not when I rode the high blooded stead.
The harder I pulled its reins the less it would heed.
Love is an ocean with such a vast space.
No wise man can swim it in any place.
A true lover should be faithful till the end.
And face life's reproached trend.
When you see things hideous, fancy them neat.
Eat poison, but taste sugar sweet."

"Rabia Balkhi represents the early struggle by women in this area to be allowed to use their minds and to be seen as individuals with their own rights, rather than exit solely as inferior beings subject to the whim and prejudices of their supposed protectors. These were many stirring, but few opportunities outside poetry to express them.

Mahasty was another lady of high sophistication and liberated ideas who lived during the Ghaznavid period of the 10th - 12th centuries A.D., another era of exceptional artistic and intellectual attainment. She was jailed twice for her outspokenness.

I knew your promises was made to be broken.
So I thought it proper to break it."

Sultan Mahmood died in 1030. He had a famous sister called Hara Khatlee. She managed to hide Sultan's death and sent a letter to Masuod who was in Asfahan to come to Ghazni and occupy the throne. It proves her prudence and involvement in politics as she selected such a suitable person with whom the majority were happy. It was previously thought that Mahmood would be the next emperor.

Ghurid is another powerful dynasty ruled (from 1148 to 1214 A.D.)in Ghor area of today's Afghanistan and was stretched as far as Delhi. Despite harsh male monopoly in the power of that time, women appeared brilliantly. To name some of them, they are; Malika-e- Khurasani, a politician and a wise princess of the time. Hara Jalai daughter of Sultan Ghyasuddin ( 1200 AD ) an influential politician, Mah Malika a famous figure in knowledge and science. Although Mah Malika was married she passed away a virgin and devoted all her life in learning; and Malika Razia, a princess and a daughter of Altamsh, a king of the Ghurid dynasty, occupied the throne in Delhi in 1228 A.D. It is said that Altamsh's son Ruknuddin, was a corrupted king after his father and Malika Razia replaced him as a ruler of India as she was thought to be clever and wise. Literature was one of her pastimes. She is regarded as the first female emperor of the Afghan area.

The invasion of the Moghuls brought nothing more than a perfect disaster and destruction. Cities were burned, the fruits of one and a half thousand years were demolished. Books, libraries, artistic works and many cultural vestiges were trampled upon and disappeared. Young women who were to beget the future generation were taken into captivity along with craftsmen and other tradesmen.Young men were led into forced labor.

This state of affairs had a tremendous effect on women in particular. In spite of this, the Afghan nation re-emerged having

rehabilitated parts of its social, economic and political life. This revival was concentrated more in Herat, the birthplace of civilizations established by Timurid dynasty however who were found ... patron of arts par excellence as epitomized by the many structures still standing at Samarkand and Herat, L. Dupree, 317.

The great share of the cultural revival, especially in the beginning of the 15th century is ascribed to a scholarly, prudent and efficient queen, Gohar Shad Begum, wife of Shahrukh, youngest son of Temerlane. She initiated (1417) the construction of a combination of several structures for school, library, hostel, mosques, hospital which despite the usurpation of that time, are still attractive and look magnificent in their architectural appearance. As the queen loved education, she encouraged scholars and artists to produce artistic work that affected on the betterment of cultural upheaval."Queen Gohar Shad commissioned the great Persian architect, Qavam-ud - din, to construct a combination Musalla (place of worship) madrasa (school or place of learning ). Two tall minars stood on either side of the madrasa front portal, and the architect inconspicuously placed Gohar Shad's in one corner. The flowery light-blue-green mosaics on the outer fluting of the dome, still impress one with their delicate beauty. Inside the dome, blues, reds, and gold leaf weave intricate designs." (Afghanistan . L. Dupree, P.318) .

Gohar Shad supported her husband in governing an area that stretched from the Tigris river to the border of China. After her husband died during a trip to Iran she was killed by Sultan Abu Saeed, great - grandson of Timor-e-lang.

From 1505 onwards, Afghanistan suffered tremendously from the lack of central government as Kabul came under the Mughuls' control in 1504, but a Safavid Persian ruled most of western Afghanistan by 1598. In 1558 the Safavids under Tahmasp 1 (1524-76) occupied Kandahar (south west of the country); in 1584 the Uzbeks seized most of Badakhshan. i.e. north of the country.

The invasion and oppression led to a national movement started by Roshanians (derived from Bayazid Roshan's name) and escalated in the government of Mirwais khan Hotaki, 1709.

# Women in Afghanistan History

M. Saeed



Dedicated to:

The great Afghan mothers who
in their laps nurtured prominent
personalities for the Afghan Nation.

## Preface:

The issue of women in the country like Afghanistan, is indeed one of the most controversial and of immense importance at familial, tribal, societal, and national levels. The number of women in Afghanistan outnumbers the male population at national level. Their problem in various aspect of life, outnumbers the males ones. Pains of the past are added to the modern ones. The modern faced April 1978 coup and subsequent 1979's Russian invasion of Afghanistan, claiming equality, peace, justice, education, for all and so on, brought new complicated problems to the half Afghan nation just before advent of the eighties of the twentieth century.

It was not merely a devastation and fall of the vulnerable status of Afghan women, but a loss of right of choice of the nation as a whole. In these new imported and dictated changes from outside, women suffered more than any other group in Afghan society. The patriotic girls, young and old women both at urban and rural fields resentfully responded to the existence of outsiders' troops in their beloved watan (home- country). Women's resistance went to the extent that lost all they possessed. Family male members, sons, husbands were either killed, disabled , conscripted or made to escape their home. It was women, at this time, who incredibly shouldered great responsibilities. Again at familial, areal and national scales.

But today, after such a disastrous situation, practically the intention towards any improvement in women's condition has regretfully felt almost at zero level. Excepting some NGOs and individuals, the political atmosphere seems to be fully neglecting the desperate condition of the entire female population. While on the other hand Afghan women particularly the enlightened, no longer tolerate ignoring their rights and openly challenge inequality and injustice determined by their dominantly traditional society.

The right given by Islam to women, have been very rarely exploited and used to the improvement of the status of women in Afghanistan. These rights and easiness are hidden in the books or in the forgotten papers.

The gradual disappearance of the true Islamic quotations regarding women, systematically resulted in the strengthening of tradition. Tradition hit and oppressed women, while the opposite sex have enjoyed ruling status until the present day.

It is therefore perceived to be a vital step to study primarilv the existing Afghan women for which a start was needed right from the very past. A series of writing aiming Afghan women is intended to take place in the near future. Of which this very little and of course impure produce is the threshold . The past helps us to judge today. Early and ancient Afghan civilizations as a cross road to many neighbor civilizations is of abundant examples where women enjoyed higher status in their communities.

Today's generation is culturally an inheritance of the past. It is why analyzing the women of today necessitate's reminding the past. The purpose here is simply to sort out the right and wrong of our early ancestors and for us to pick up the right aspect of the culture as humankind develops and improve social rules that is the meaning of a civilization.

I regret that I could not complete my higher education nor was able to study systematically either anthropology or sociology. What I have gained so far can be credited to my great personal interest in studying such subjects, later added to by acrimonious experience obtained during exiled life in Pakistan. And to this experience was added the work in an NGO which offer relief services inside Afghanistan. Reports were prepared , data were complied on the reality of the life that communities were faced with.

Writing about such an ambitious subject is not a simple task and I am very conscious of my shortcomings in its fulfillments as, on the one hand, I am a man, and on the other, I am not trained scholar in this field. But what is important for us is to write to the best of our ability and for the work to be used as a guide for future generations. It is for them to raise and complete it properly.

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